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Topaz Just a Slice Of Real-Life Drama

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Ordinarily you might take Philippe Thryaud de Vosjoli for an instructor of the humanities; an articulate draftsman, perhaps; or even a doctor of medicine.

But certainly, you would not take hom for a spy.

BUT THE small, dignified Frenchman, who for 20 of his 51 years was a top intelligence officer for France, and who last week won a breach of contract suit against well-known author Leon Uris over the best-selling novel Topaz, which was a highly fictionalized parallel — with additives — of de Vosjoli's own story, has had in his life all the ingredients for a shelf-full of international tension plots.

He has:

- Lived for weeks in tribal tents with nomads on the Syrian desert — "We were trying to get them to join with the Free French" during World War II.
- Been attacked by Chinese brigands during some Far East negotiations — "We were making contact in Indochina with people buying information and at that time the Chinese already were not very friendly to us."
- Awakened one morning in Cuba to find that "a revolution had taken place."
- Been tried in absentia and condemned to death in Cuba.
- Been forewarned of an assasination plan of which he was to be the victim, and a writer from a French publication told him "in only recent weeks he had talked with someone who confided to him that 'if that de Vosjoli is still alive, it's not our fault.'"

The soft-voiced man with the placid expression that will smile with such full-face-force it's like a high powered flood being turned on somewhere in back of the skin, tells you about the events that easily pale agent 007's experiences — events that have — still do — affect governments, groups of peoples and international codes. But the French voice is all calm. Understatement.

HE FOLDS his hands, one over the other, in the olive velvet chair in the South Dade home where he lives with his wife Monique — a chic, dark-haired woman who is a former United Nations translator — a place where they have lived for the past six years.

"People love the word 'spy,'" he said. "But they don't realize that there are two types of spies. The one who really does the spying, and the one who directs it. I was one of the type who directed."

This quiet man has been, in his lifetime, revered and respected, and his word, while still in his 20s, a deciding factor for his country, and also a man later attempted to be written off as "comic" when his knowledge of infiltration of Russia's cover agents revealed surprisingly high-ranking personnel up to the arrest of "Georges Paques, chief information officer for NATO who had been a personal aide to seven (French) prime ministers" for turning over NATO papers to Russian agents.

All the information had stemmed from defection of a high officer of the KGB, the Russian state security organization who had come to Washington through U.S. agents — a man given the French code name "Martel."

MARTEL'S information uncovered agents in several Western countires, de Vosjoli said, "but it was most emphasized in France because France would not believe that this situation existed."

It was de Vosjoli who was to try unsuccessfully to convince France of the truth of Martel's information.

"I come from a family of lawyers," de Vosjoli said, in the big room with arched doorways; paintings, books lining its walls. But World War II gave his life another turn than the family traditional way. At 22, he found himself "a de Gaulle aide and in charge of organizing resistance and intelligence operations in Indochina." After the war, "I returned to Paris and became assistant to the director of French intelligence."

At 25, he was his country's youngest such officer.

WHEN THE NATO treaty was signed, France appointed him its officer; he was in charge of intelligence in liaison with the CIA.

Since Latin America, the Caribbean, were part of his area, from his Washington base, he frequently was in Miami — "I've always loved this area" — and thought he'd spend the Christmas holidays here one year.

"But the weather was so bad, I drove down and took the ferry to Havana. I had dinner with some friends there that night and when I awoke the next morning, I heard marching in the street, a lot of noise. They told me a revolution had taken place.

"I tried to call Washington to talk with my children (Philippe Jr., now 23, and Patrick, 21, both University of Miami graduates, the latter a newsman for Channel 10), and they told me it was impossible.

"AT FIRST people started to panic. But I found where the headquarters had been set up — a Castro aide was in charge of headquarters in a radio-television station, CMQ, right in front of my hotel. So I went there and introduced myself as a French diplomat and said I just wanted to tour the place.

"The aide said all right, but I would have to have special men with me. So I drove all over Cuba with four men sitting on my car with machine guns — two on the front and two in back. I think I was the first Westerner to travel throughout Cuba after the revolution.

"I hurried back to Washington and all the congressmen asked me about

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